

the Zolas returned from M^dan. A fire was therefore lighted in their bedroom — with some difficulty, it would seem, for the chimney did not draw well. This chimney was common both to the Zolas' bedroom and to some apartments overhead, occupied by other tenants, one of whom had recently had it swept in its tipper part. The sweeping, it is thought, may have brought down sundry fragments of brick-work and cement, which remained obstructing the lower part of the chimney, the Zolas on their side having given no orders for sweeping it, as, on account of the heating apparatus in the cellars, it was seldom used by them. In any case, whatever may have been the exact cause, the chimney was certainly obstructed, and on the evening of September 28 Madame Zola, observing that the fire burnt very badly, expressed an intention of having the chimney examined by some workmen who were engaged on various repairs in the rooms.

She and her husband sat down to dinner that evening about eight o'clock. They were very hungry and made a hearty meal. Then, at an early hour, being somewhat tired by their removal from the country to town, they retired to rest. At that moment Madame Zola observed that the bedroom fire was smouldering, and asked her husband if he wished It to be extinguished. He answered that he did not think it necessary, for it would soon burn out. Then

one or the
other lowered to within a few inches of the
heaxth the
sheet-iron *tallier*; a kind of screen or shutter
with which
most French fireplaces are provided. They
went to bed and
fell asleep, but about three o'clock in the
morning Madame
Zola suddenly awoke, experiencing a feeling of
great oppression. Her head was heavy and she was seized
with nausea.